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HISTORY of GOSHEN CHURCH



Presented by

DR. J. K. HALL, Pastor



At The

Celebration of the 175th Anniversary of
GOSHEN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Observed Sunday, October 15th, 1939

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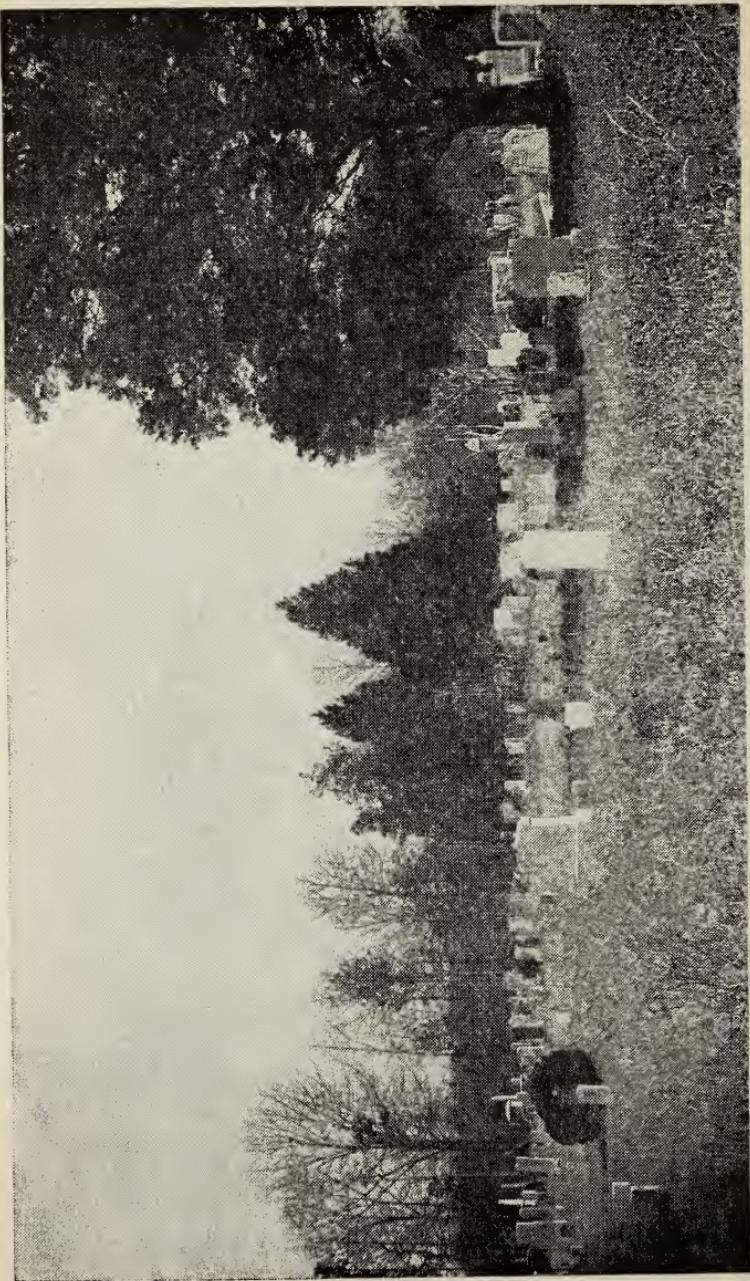


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GOSHEN CEMETERY



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History of Goshen Church

Goshen Presbyterian Church, North Belmont, N. C., was certainly organized as early as 1764, though a house of worship had been built and a congregation gathered prior to this time.

In that year the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, "Concerned about the congregations in the South, especially in North Carolina," sent Rev. Elihu Spencer and Alexander McWhorter to North Carolina to assist these congregations in perfecting their organizations. It is almost certain that Goshen's organization was completed by this commission.

It is hard to visualize one hundred and seventy-five years. At that time Napoleon Bonaparte had not been born. George III had only recently ascended the throne of England. George Washington was a young man unknown to fame. There was only a fringe of settlements along the Atlantic seaboard. The great west beyond the Appalachian Mountains had not yet been penetrated.

When the first settlers came to North Carolina they found much of the state open prairie. As Dr. Foote says, "vast areas, later heavily wooded," grew nothing but most luxuriant grass (Foote's Sketches of North Carolina, p. 189). Gaston County was no exception. This seems providential. The game of the prairie furnished food, and the pioneer was saved the enormous task of clearing the forest.

Life in those early days was primitive. The houses were log cabins built on the edge of the prairie near a spring. The roads were little more than trails, and travel was on horse back or on foot. The only wagon was of the "Pennsylvania" variety with wheels made of solid blocks of wood sawed from large trees. The hand loom furnished all clothing. Plows were boards tipped with iron. We still have an echo of this ancient plow in the word mould-board. Postal facilities were of the most

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meagre kind. There was not to be a newspaper published west of Raleigh for nearly fifty years, and because of lack of postal facilities none circulated in this area.

From 1750 to 1764, as shown from land grants on record (See Mrs. Puett's History of Gaston County), a regular stream of immigrants poured into what is now Gaston County. These were largely Scotch-Irish and Germans from Pennsylvania, though a few representatives of other nationalities came along. The Scotch-Irish settled the eastern and southern part of the county and were solidly Presbyterian.

Some time prior to 1764 a log church had been erected in what is now the old part of the cemetery, used for worship and also for school purposes. It must have been in this building that the formal organization of Goshen took place. It would be interesting if we could roll back the years and see these people as they met for organization. Their dress would appear quaint and odd to us. All were dressed in home spun and in the style of that day. The only people wearing "store clothes" were the visiting ministers. But if these people were quaintly dressed, they were intelligent, courageous and self-reliant—real men and women.

Unfortunately the records of the organization of the church, and all early records of the church have been lost, an irreparable calamity. We do not know who were the charter members of the church or who were the first elders.

For thirty-two years the church was without a settled, ordained minister. Very few southern congregations could obtain pastors during these years. This was principally due to the scarcity of ministers and to the reluctance of some ministers to bring their families so far from a society such as was found in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Some time between the years 1775 and 1778 Robert Archibald, a licentiate of Orange Presbytery, lived about three quarters of a mile west of Belmont and preached at Goshen. He was a graduate of Princeton College, a fair scholar, but erratic and unstable, and was never called to become pastor. He later joined the Universalist Church.

The main dependance during this early period was on ministers from the north. The church sought supplies from the Synod of New York and Philadelphia and also from the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania. All the Scotch-Irish were Presbyterian, but of two varieties, regular Presbyterians and Associate Presbyterians. Both united in establishing Goshen, but because of former associations ministers from both sources were sought and both were equally welcome.

The coming of the minister was a great day in Goshen. For a week the people gathered from far and near to feast on the Word as it was preached to them. Camp-meetings were held, and at these times the preaching was out of doors to accommodate the crowds that attended. The remains of this out-door preaching place were still visible seventy years ago. In addition to the joy of worship the visiting ministers brought news from the outside world. One can easily see how welcome this was when we remember that no newspapers were available and letters scarce on account of meagre postal facilities. At the same time the minister brought his saddle bags stuffed with letters from friends in the north, and was willing to stuff his saddle bags with letters for friends back home. Truly these ministers were welcome.

It seems remarkable that under the preaching of occasional visiting ministers that the church should grow and flourish, as grow and flourish it certainly did. When Humphrey Hunter became pastor he found a strong-vigorous church. Mr. Hunter accepted a call to Goshen for half of his time March 30, 1796. On account of the scarcity of ministers few churches thought of whole time service. The minister had to be shared with others. In this case Unity Church shared Mr. Hunter's services along with Goshen. Goshen provided a salary of sixty-two pounds, ten shillings, North Carolina money, or fifty pounds in silver or gold. If Unity provided a like amount the whole salary was one hundred and twenty-five pounds in North Carolina money or one hundred pounds in silver or gold. This would equal \$500 or more. We would not think much of such a salary today, but in that day it was rather generous.

Goshen's call was signed by the following: Robert Johnson, Robert Johnson, Jr., Andrew Johnson, Joseph Dickson, William Rankin, Henry Davies, John McCaul,

Robert Alexander, James Martin, James Rutledge, James Gulick, Benjamine Smith, James Dickson, William Moore, Jonathan Graves, David Baxter, John Moore, Samuel Caldwell, Robert Curry. These were probably not all officers of the church but the heads of the leading families of the church. This pastorate, lasting eight years, was a happy one, the preacher living in the congregation at what is now the Thomas W. Springs place near Mount Holly.

Originally Goshen occupied a very large territory. It extended from the Lincoln County line on the north to the South Carolina line on the south and from the Catawba River as far west as Gastonia. However, it was not long until the organization of other churches cut deeply into this territory. When Pisgah A. R. P. Church was organized in 1796 the far western members of Goshen went into that organization. (Dr. Robert Lathan's History of the A. R. P. Synod.) Near the same time New Hope was organized, and all the Goshen members immediately west of the South Fork River from above Lowell south to the South Carolina line, went into this new organization. This left only one group of Goshen members west of the South Fork River, a group near Dallas. Andrew Hoyle was a leader in this group, a consecrated Elder who rode nine miles to church every preaching Sunday. With the exception of this one group, for fifty-five years Goshen congregation lay between the Catawba and the South Fork of the Catawba in the shape of a great V, extending from the Lincoln County line to the point where the rivers come together at the South Carolina line.

These fifty-five years were the "golden age" of Goshen. The number of families were greatly increased by natural reproduction. Many of the people accumulated considerable wealth. This led to better educational facilities. Papers and periodicals were circulated. Good books were bought and read. The minds of the people were still further disciplined on strong preaching and the study of the Shorter Catechism. All were supposed to know the Catechism and were liable to be called upon to recite at any gathering. The preacher made his regular rounds each year catechizing the people.

In 1851 the Dallas Presbyterian Church was organized

and the Goshen members west of the South Fork near Hoyleville went into that organization. Two years later Castenea Grove was organized, cutting off the northeastern section of the congregation.

Then followed the frightful Civil War. The young men of the congregation almost without exception went to the war, some never to return. The surrender found the community prostrate. The old people soon died, and many of the young people moved elsewhere to start life over.

The names of some of the most prominent families in the church have vanished. Where are the Kuykendalls, the Moores, the Alexanders, the Johnsons, the Johnstons, the Hoyles, the Rudicills, the Jingles, the Dicksons, the Davieses, the McCauls, the Baxters, the Caldwell's, the Currys, the Berrys, the Martins, the Davidsons, the Hendersons, the Hunters and others? Some of their very names seem strange to us today.

Soon after the Civil War the Seaboard Airline R.R. was built through the congregation to the north of the church and the Southern R. R. through the congregation to the south of the church. Towns began to grow up at Belmont, Mount Holly and Stanley Creek.

In 1890 the Belmont Presbyterian Church was organized, taking away very valuable members from Goshen. In 1891 the Stanley Creek Church was organized, taking away the Goshen members in that section. In 1891 the Mount Holly members began worship in Mount Holly.

It has been thought by some that the Goshen organization was moved to Mount Holly, but this was not the case. The move was at one time contemplated, and a majority of the congregation voted to move conditionally. January 4, 1891 the congregation took the following action, "We do agree to transfer the place of worship from the old grounds to Mount Holly, Gaston County, at the end of this year, if a house of worship shall then be built at Mount Holly." But at the end of that year according to the records, there was no house of worship at Mount Holly.

The next congregational meeting was held December 10, 1892 almost two years later. After stating that no work had been done during the year on the new church at

Mount Holly, that their pastor had resigned, that members had been lost by death and removal, the congregation took the following action: "In view of all these facts before us, the members of Goshen Church do now advise our trustees to hold the old church subject to the use of the congregation. That R. C. Belk, C. L. Hutchinson, and L. G. Cathey arrange for services the next year, and we will encourage the completion of the church at Mount Holly to be used as a chapel or branch of the old organization." Nearly two years after the conditional action noted above, all thought of removing the Goshen organization to Mount Holly had vanished. The new building at Mount Holly was encouraged as "a chapel or branch of the old organization."

Kings Mountain Presbytery at its spring meeting in 1929 appointed the following committee to determine the ownership of the Goshen property: Rev. W. J. Roach, Rev. H. N. McDiarmid, Mr. C. E. Neisler and Mr. C. M. Robinson. This committee reported September 25, 1929 in part as follows: "Your committee went over the property in detail and after returning to the church building examined and discussed all the deeds and records concerning the Goshen Church. After carefully reading and re-reading all the minutes of session and congregational meetings relative to the removal and division of the old church it was the unanimous finding of your committee that the property belongs to the present Goshen Church." This finding was based on the fact that the Goshen organization had not been moved to Mount Holly. The report of this committee was unanimously adopted by Presbytery September 25, 1929.

After the Mount Holly Church set up housekeeping the old Mother Church was weak indeed. At one time the membership sank to five—one man and four women. However, for the past fifteen years the church has shown new life. With the usual losses from death and removal the roll now numbers 115.

On October 2, 1927, by unanimous vote of the congregation and the consent of the Presbytery the Goshen organization was moved from the old church to the new one erected by the generosity of the Belmont Presbyterian Church.

Goshen has occupied four church buildings. The first,

as has already been stated, was a log building within the old part of the cemetery. The second was a larger log building on the opposite hill near what we call "Old Goshen." The third was the frame building erected in 1839, just a hundred years ago, largely under the leadership of Andrew Hoyle. The fourth is the building in which we worship today.

In its long life twenty ministers have served Goshen, as pastors or supplies. They were: Robert Archibald, Humphrey Hunter, J. E. Bell, a Mr. Pomeroy, R. Y. Russell, W. C. Davis, Henry N. Pharr, Patrick J. Sparrow, W. N. Morrison, J. S. McCuthen, James D. Hall, R. N. Davis, J. J. Kennedy, J. W. Query, R. Z. Johnston, Cornelius Miller, S. L. Cathey, F. A. Drennan, W. J. Roach and J. K. Hall. This list shows that Goshen has enjoyed a good average of ministers. Some of them were outstanding, notably Dr. Humphrey Hunter of Revolutionary fame, Dr. Patrick J. Sparrow, later President of Hampden-Sidney College, James D. Hall and Dr. R. Z. Johnston.

Goshen has made large contributions to the church and community at large. It contributed very largely to the establishment of seven churches: Pisgah A. R. P. Church, New Hope, Dallas, Castanea Grove, Belmont, Mount Holly and Stanley Creek. And who can estimate the contribution of Goshen to other states and other communities where her migrating children have gone to help build other churches and develop other communities?

Goshen has contributed at least five ministers to the church at large. Two sons of William Moore, a leader in Goshen, became Presbyterian ministers, spending their lives in the west. Rev. W. T. Hall, D.D., Professor in Columbia Seminary and Moderator of the General Assembly in Jackson, Mississippi, was a son of one of the pastors and reared in the church. Rev. J. K. Hall, D.D., also a son of one of the pastors, and Rev. F. B. Rankin, grandson of one of the signers to the call for Rev. Humphrey Hunter, were the other two.

Rev. W. W. Moore, D.D., the late distinguished President of Union Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, was a grandson of the church. His father was reared in Goshen, and his ancestors for three generations lie buried in the old cemetery out there.

Many doctors have gone from Goshen to minister to

the sick and suffering. Among these are Dr. C. L. Hunter, Dr. Henry Hunter, Dr. J. C. Rudisill, Dr. Abernathy, Dr. J. E. Neagle, Dr. W. B. Henderson and others.

Many of the sons and daughters of Goshen have given themselves for longer or shorter periods to teaching the young. Two have been outstanding in the educational field, Prof. J. Lee Love, son of Elder R. C. G. Love, Professor of Mathematics in Harvard University, and Prof. F. P. Hall, son of a pastor, who gave fifty years of his life to educational work, and who for more than a third of a century was Superintendent of Schools in Gaston County, and largely responsible for the excellent system of schools now in existence.

Two great lawyers were reared in Goshen congregation and attended Goshen in their youth, General R. D. Johnston and Captain J. F. Johnston, of Birmingham, Alabama. General R. D. Johnston, though a very young man rose to the rank of Brigadier General in the Confederate Army. Captain J. F. Johnston became governor of Alabama and United States Senator from Alabama for a number of terms. General R. D. Johnston was an equally great lawyer but seemed to care nothing for political honors. Both were great Christians and great Presbyterians as well as great lawyers.

Goshen has contributed many leaders to industry, especially in the textile field. Messrs. R. L. and S. P. Stowe, who as boys and young men attended Goshen, were the pioneers in the textile industry in Belmont. Mr. C. E. Hutchinson, of Mount Holly, was a son of an elder and as a boy and young man attended Goshen. Mr. R. C. G. Love, an elder was a pioneer manufacturer in Gastonia. Mr. John F. Love of Gastonia, and his brother Mr. Edgar Love, of Lincolnton, both textile executives, were sons of Elder R. C. G. Love and were reared in Goshen. Mr. W. T. Love, mill executive of Gastonia, was a member of Goshen. Mr. J. A. Abernathy, manufacturer of Lincolnton, was once an elder in Goshen.

The greatest contribution, however, the church has made is found in the many souls which have been born into the Kingdom through her ministrations, the weary and heavy laden souls that have been comforted, and the general moral and spiritual uplift she has given to a large section of the country.

Appendix

REASONS FOR THE 1764 DATE

Land grants on record show a large Scotch-Irish population within the bounds of Goshen Church in 1764. Those who had come to America largely for religious liberty would not neglect an opportunity for an organized church. That opportunity came in 1764 when Elihu Spencer and Alexander McWhorter were sent to North Carolina to see after the organization of churches. We know the church was organized prior to 1767. In the minutes of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia of that year, "Goshen in the forks of the Catawba" is put down as one of the churches seeking supplies (see Foote's Sketches of N. C., p. 318). There was no similar opportunity for an organization between 1764 to 1767. The commission from the Synod of New York and Philadelphia were in the general section in which Goshen is located and at that time Goshen was an important Presbyterian centre. The conclusion is inevitable that the organization took place in 1764 or before.

ELDERS

We have no authentic list of Elders prior to 1846 when Rev. James D. Hall became pastor. At that time the church was eighty-two years old, and many must have served as Elders during that long period, but owing to loss of records and lapse of time their names are unknown.

The following is a list of persons who are known to have served Goshen as Elders: Andrew Hoyle, Robert Alexander, Thomas Gingles, William Rutledge, Robert Rankin, James P. Oates, Daniel Rhyne, William Fite, C. L. Hutchinson, R. C. G. Love, J. A. Abernathy, M. N. Hall, J. C. Robinson, Lewis G. Cathey, C. H. Lineberger, W. A. Robinson, and R. A. Thrower.

DEACONS

As far as can now be learned there were no deacons in

Goshen prior to 1873. In many old churches it was customary for the Elders to serve as deacons. The list is short, and is as follows :

Abraham Stowe, R. C. Nantz, W. A. Robinson, J. C. White, Edward Thomas, L. N. Untz and Herman White.

SURNAMES OF GOSHEN MEMBERS

There were often many families of the same name on the church roll. The list as far as we certainly know these names from 1764 to 1900 is as follows: Kuykendall, Moore, Johnson, Johnston, Alexander, Caldwell, Hoyle, Smith, Gulick, Dickson, Davies, McCaul, Martin, Rutledge, Rankin, Graves, Baxter, Curry, Oliver, Berry, Gingles, McLean, Rudicill, Henderson, Hunter, Shipp, Davidson, Nantz, Richards, Fite, Love, Hutchinson, Abernathy, Stowe, Hall, Neagle, Cathey, Springs, Rhyne, Beaty, Clarke, Ewing, Dunn, Titman, McKnight, Gaston, Lineberger, Rumfelt, Humphries, Gallant, Jeeter.

This list is undoubtedly very incomplete, especially in regard to the very earliest members of the church. There were those bearing Scotch-Irish names living within the congregation who were probably members of the church. The most probable are the following: Palmer, Patterson, Patrick, Price, Ramsey, Penick, Templeton, Turner, Barnett, Hemphill, Spratt, Allison, Glenn, Graham, Boyd.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION IN REGARD TO GOSHEN MINISTERS

For Humphrey Hunter see Foote's Sketches of North Carolina.

For Robert Archibald, W. N. Davis, J. J. Kennedy and R. Z. Johnston see Dr. I. S. McElroy's "Some Pioneer Preachers in Piedmont North Carolina."

For W. N. Morrison, J. S. McCutchen, Henry N. Pharr and Cornelious Miller see Union Seminary Centennial Catalogue.

For James D. Hall see "Rev. James D. Hall and His Descendants."

For Patrick J. Sparrow and J. E. Bell see Quarter-Centennial of Rev. R. Z. Johnston's Pastorate, Lincolnton Presbyterian Church.

W. C. Davis, born Sept. 16, 1760; educated at Mt. Zion College, Winnsboro, S. C.; preached at Bullock's Creek, Olney, and Goshen; organized Independent Presbyterian Church; died Sept. 27, 1831.

R. Y. Russell, born in Ireland; ordained minister in Independent Church by W. C. Davis; Leader in Independent Church after Davis' death; man of high character, fine spirit, and very useful as preacher; led Independent Church into Presbyterian Church, C. S. A., in 1864; died November 5, 1866.

It has been impossible to find any data on Rev. Mr. Pomeroy.

For Rev. J. W. Query see History of Mecklenburg Presbytery, by Rev. W. E. McIlwaine, D.D.

